

# ACTIVE

TRANSFORMATION

FREE

ISSUE 3  
SUMMER 1994



Photo taken by: Laurie Green - Lansing, April 23, 1994

## COPS AND KLAN

### GO HAND IN HAND



Over 1000 people came out to tell the Ku Klux Klan they aren't welcome in Lansing on April 23. Although the press and local politicians had baited the Anti-Klan demonstrators as violent, it turned out that the protesters were quite peaceful when not being incited by the police. The Lansing State Journal and the local television stations urged everyone to stay away from the Klan rally under the hypocritical notion of "providing the Klan with the press they desire", while they covered the Klan rally developments almost daily. And when the Klan's hateful message was practically drowned out of listenability by the counter demonstrators, Channels 6 and 10 (some of the few allowed intimate contact with the Klan inside the fence) broadcast their spoutings of hate and division on tv that night.

Although the 550 cops were there for "public safety" and to "protect free speech rights", this was the complete opposite for the counter demonstrators. Although there were a couple(2 or 3) violent acts initiated by the Anti-Klan protesters, the cops were looking for a fight the whole day. Armed to the teeth with tear gas, pepper gas, and machine guns the police continually assaulted the counterdemonstrators. Babies and young children were maced by police trying to move people who were "too close to the fence" that was already 100 yards away from the Klan.

After the rally was over, the crowd moved behind the Capital where the Klan was supposed to make its exit. Here police tried clearing the area of protesters exercising their "right to free speech." They used tear gas against a peaceful crowd, and when people refused to leave, appalled by the police pro-

tection and legitimization of the Klan, they started making arrests.

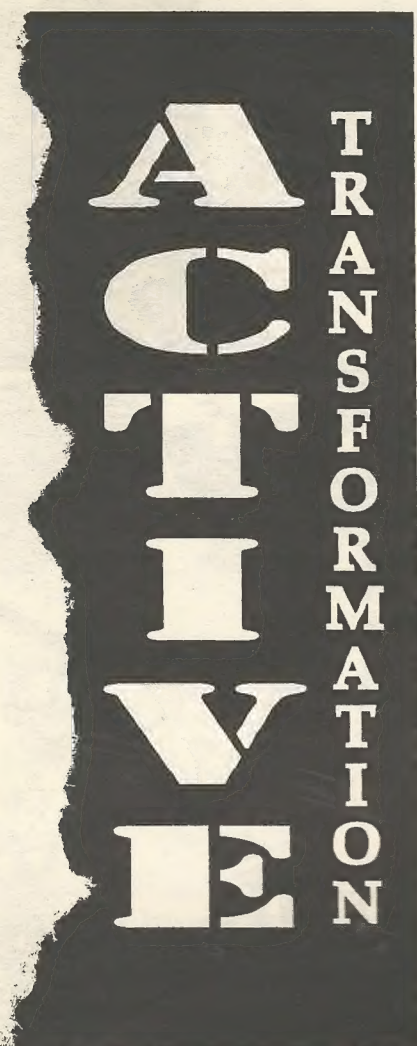
One man was yelling at the police and then the police charged him. He immediately laid down to avoid resisting the police, to no avail. The police jumped on top of him and started hitting him, although he was not resisting them at all and he had not committed any violent action.

When someone was arrested, Diane Goldberg and someone else followed to make sure they didn't beat the kid up. They were forced to lay down, be searched at machine gun point, and told to run or they'd get hurt.

The Lansing Anti-Klan Defense Committee organized bail for six of the seven protesters arrested (the other was bailed out immediately). We are in the process of getting lawyers for those arrested. Most were arrested for disorderly conduct, but there was one felony charge. David Zylstra was indiscriminantly arrested after someone in the crowd threw a rock and hit a cop. He is being charged with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder.

The cops and the Klan go hand in hand. We cannot stand idly by as the City of Lansing subsidizes the kkk with \$150,000 worth of taxpayer police protection. Mayor Hollister, as a public relations move, keeps saying he has billed the KKK for \$40,000; but the reality is he can't bill them after the fact. The KKK plan on coming back twice now. We have to come out in full force whenever they rise out of the gutter and show the KKK that they are not welcome in Lansing.





**ACTIVE TRANSFORMATION PO BOX 6746  
EAST LANSING, MI 48826**

Active Transformation is published by LCC Students for Environmental Action. Active Transformation is not an official LCC publication.

Active Transformation is about keeping news of oppression in the public eye constantly through this newspaper, demonstrations, flyers, pamphlets, public media, etc. It is about exposing the lies of our times: pollution is progress; war is humanitarianism; soldiers are peacekeepers.

But more so AT is about Active Resistance to oppression and coercion - whatever form it takes: capitalism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, racism, destruction of the earth, militarism, etc.

Active Transformation is about concentration on the creation of better systems, as well as, destruction of oppressive, coercive systems. It is about keeping hope for the future, while not forgetting your past, NON-APATHY, working toward a future society based on SELF-DETERMINATION, cooperation, mutual aid, and compassion between all living things for peaceful coexistence with the world.

Active Transformation is about having fun and making friends, communicating while resisting the state. It is about making connections with individuals and groups all over the world. We are about supporting others in resistance.

## ACTIVE TRANSFORMATION IS WORLD WIDE AUTONOMOUS REVOLUTION!

AT #3 Summer 94, 5000 copies

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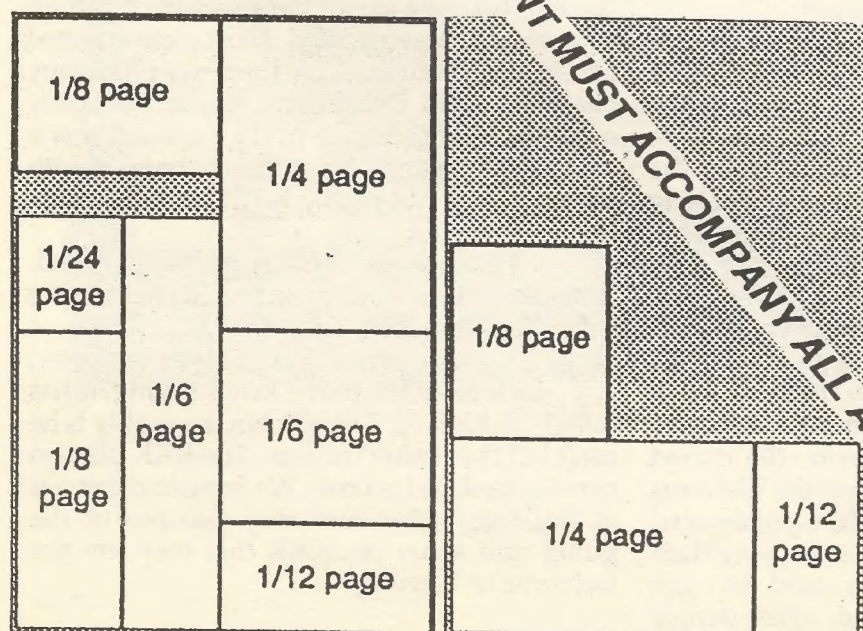
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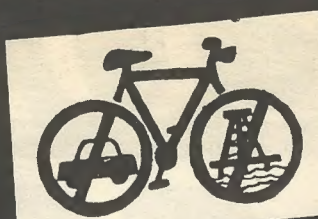
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### CRITICAL MASS bike & Ride

First **THURSDAY**/Every Month  
4:30pm @ **BEAUMONT TOWER**



On April 21 about 40 people on bikes took over the streets of East Lansing for the first area Critical Mass Bike Ride. It was a slow spontaneous and social and probably all who showed up enjoyed the time.

Butt there is much more to the Critical Mass than having fun. It is about **DEATH TO KAR KULTURE**. It is about telling the pigs who hog the road with their pollution monsters to get the fuck out the way!

More importantly though, it is about stressing the greatness of bikes: the pollution free transportation joys that allow for involvement with the environmental and social world; not alienation from the rest of the world in a shiny expensive metal box.

The riders rode loudly around Circle Drive in MSU then headed out onto Grand River, the main drag through EL. There were shouts of "Kill Kar Kulture" and "Bicycle Revolution". We were slow and joyous and traffic was mildly backed up, until we turned down Collingwood, back through downtown.

Stoked on the fun and the sun we decided to make another go of it. We took the same route, but this time we took Grand River for about a mile, all the way to Hagadorn. People on bikes joined in all through the ride making for all the more fun. Eventually the pigs showed up and told us to move, but wonderfully nobody obeyed, and everybody got off of the sirens and whistles. Rush hour traffic was backed up and we made our point. We want the road to be safe for bikers!

Too soon it was over and everyone headed their separate way. Friends were made. The power of the people was felt. I can't think of a better way to start off the summer.



Photo by: Randy



# COLLECTIVE COMPLICATED BY CITY

Active Transformation is trying to open up a community center, but we're having much trouble. We have a building all lined up for \$350 a month, but due to the high cost of permits we can't afford to move in. This article, besides describing our objectives, is a plea for help. Check out our goals, and if you can afford a donation we could really use it. If you know of a storefront that we could rent really cheap from someone cool, or if you can have a benefit party for us (we have a p.a. and can arrange bands). If you know of a hall we could rent cheap to do benefit shows it would be a great help.

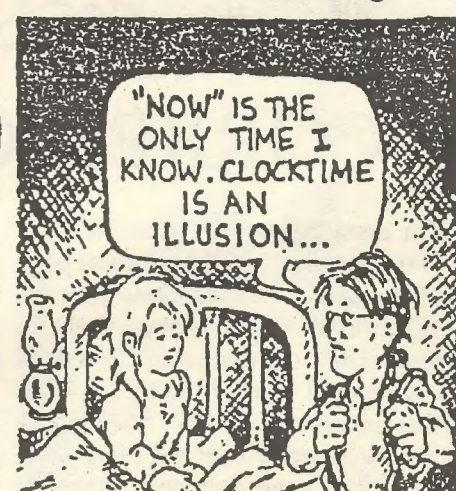
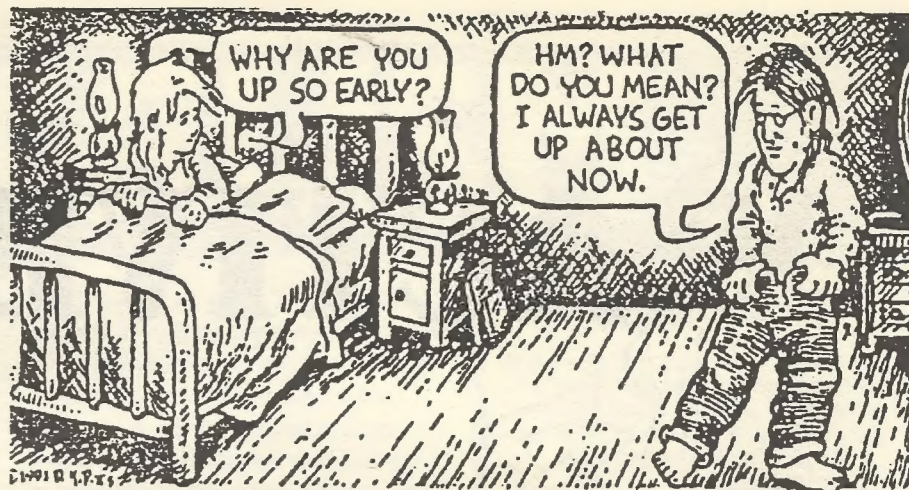
We want to open a community center for the purpose of having a central location where activism can grow from in the community. The goal has been to have it in a lower income area of Lansing, where we hope to attract people from the community, not just students.

We plan to have an open daily book/info shop. We'll have all sorts of literature pertaining to activism and community and people's empowerment. We would also have a pay what you like thrift store to bring in minimal funds and supply usable clothing and goods cheap or free to those in need. There would also be a lounge with couches for reading and talking with free coffee.

There would also be weekly events such as politically or socially relevant speakers, workshops, artshows, potlucks, etc. The space would also be open for other community groups to meet at.

The problem comes in when it comes to paying the rent. We have all agreed to pitch in money monthly, and have the money to put down the initial payment; but we're afraid we might not have enough every month. We are all working low income jobs and/or going to school so most of us don't have a lot of money floating around. We were planning on paying the rent by doing concerts and theatre; but that's where the permit problems come in. The city has such high fees for a "business" that does shows that there is no way we can afford that.

We are determined to make this work, but we could really use some help. If anyone out there is interested in helping out or has some good ideas please drop us a line immediately.



..AN ARBITRARY MEASUREMENT IMPOSED ON THE INFINITE BY ANAL, FRAIDY-CAT, BOURGEOIS TIDDY-BABIES WHO CAN'T STAND ANYTHING THEY AREN'T ABLE TO MEASURE AND ORGANIZE.



HEY KIDS! DON'T BE FOOLED! THERE IS NO TIME BUT THE PRESENT



CUT OUT AND PASTE ON TOP OF YOUR WATCH. -- IT'S ALWAYS ACCURATE --

# WEVE HAD ENOUGH!



# ENGLER -VS- EDUCATION WORKERS

The recent actions of governor Engler and Michigan republicans have made clear their intention to destroy the public education system if Michigan. In this they are following the disastrous lead of California republicans, who have managed over a period of years to turn what was once the model of public systems into a carnival of hopelessness.

This attempt must not be allowed to succeed. Terms such as "schools of choice" and "cost containment" are euphemisms for restricting access to quality education and busting education workers unions. What is needed is more and better-paid teachers and support staff, and more tax dollars going into the classroom instead of the pockets of millionaires.

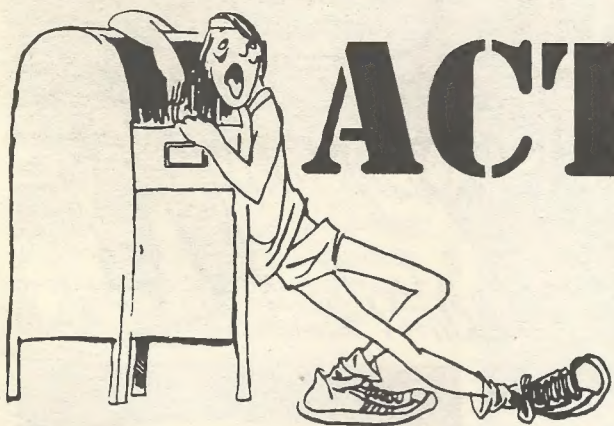
Engler is a cave dweller, a throwback, a holdover from a bygone era (the Reagan era). He represents boundless greed and pure hatefulness, the same combination that has brought this country to the very brink of disaster. His time is over and he should be gone, but he's not. He's still strutting around like a latter-day Mussolini, promoting his own "toughness" instead of serving the needs of the people of Michigan.

The republicans have almost total

power in the legislature, thanks as much to the spinelessness of the democrats as to their own ability to exploit the unwise. The only power we can bring against them is the power of numbers, the power that springs from below. If they want to fine us for going out on strike, then let's stay in on strike. In the 1930s the autoworkers of Michigan were faced with a system as bent on destroying their unions as the current one is on destroying ours. They risked everything rather than meekly surrender. AND THEY WON. What are we willing to risk? Are we willing to face the power of a corrupt and mean-spirited system and not back down? These are the questions we will have to ask ourselves. If the republicans attempt to bust our unions are we just going to take it? Just turn it over to the lawyers and politicians and let them figure it out? If we do, then we deserve what we'll get. If we do, the whole state will suffer for it, and none more than the young, and none among them more than the poor.

Taken from flyer by:  
Education Workers Federation





# ACTIVE

## CORRESPONDENCE

The essay below was submitted as a "Point of View" to the editorial page of the of the Lansing State Journal. When I called to check on their intended date of publication, I was told by assistant editor Marcia Van Ness that the essay had either been lost or had never arrived at the State Journal. I then hand-delivered a copy to Ms. Van Ness the next day. She then admitted that they had indeed received the essay, but that since it contained criticism of the State Journal it had been sent to the editor's office, "and sometimes things that go in there don't come out." Three days later I received a letter from editorial page editor Mark Nixon informing me that my essay was too long to be printed as a "letter to the editor" (100 words max), but that they would gladly edit it for me. Mr. Nixon has to date refused to return my calls.

April 27, 1994

Dear Editor:

As a member of the organizing coalition for the April 23rd anti-klan rally at the capitol, I feel it necessary to set the record straight regarding that event and events leading up to it.

Most of the violence which occurred at the rally was instigated by the Michigan State Police and directed against anti-klan demonstrators. The indiscriminate use of mace and pepper gas against demonstrators, including young children, while protecting the ku klux klan, can only indicate the sympathies of state police commanders and the governor who gives them orders. In their zeal to protect the free speech of the klan they are more than happy to deny that same right to anti-klan demonstrators.

Of the over 1500 anti-klan demonstrators present, only a small fraction were from out of town (as evidenced by the fact that six of the seven people arrested were from Lansing). The attempt by the mayor to portray anti-klan people as "outside agitators" is almost as shameful as his failed attempt to let the klan rally unopposed.

The behavior of the news media in their build-up to the 23rd was both irresponsible and hypocritical. The State Journal in particular proved itself an embarrassment to journalism. On the one hand it gave pages and pages of coverage to the klan rally, and then it implored anti-klan demonstrators to stay away from the capitol and "not give [the klan] the attention they crave". WILX and

WLNS tv performed similar twists of logic. But merely being hypocritical wasn't enough for tv 6 and tv 10. Since anti-klan forces were largely successful in drowning out the hateful, racist and homophobic remarks of the klan speakers, WILX and WLNS decided to broadcast those remarks on the evening news. This is not merely reporting the news, it is promoting a particular political viewpoint.

The cooperation of governor Engler in the klan recruitment rally was obvious and his reasons for doing so are clear. A comparison to the klan/nazi rally of 1983 shows the glaring differences in approach used by the governor at that time (Blanchard) and that of Engler. In 1983 the fascists were granted the right to hold their rally, and state police protection was even provided, but no enormous outlay of public funds and state-initiated publicity occurred. 200 anti-fascist demonstrators were able to keep the klan and nazis from delivering their message of hate, with minimal disruption of the peace of the community.

In 1994, the conservative press and the right-wing state government cooperate to spend tens of thousands of tax payers dollars just to make sure the fascist message of hate is heard. Why? Obviously there has been a dramatic shift at some level of society in the interim. The klan was allowed to demonstrate their loathsome and lurid brand of fascism to make the "friendly fascism" installed during the Reagan/Bush era, the type of fascism Engler follows, seem more reasonable and less lurid itself.

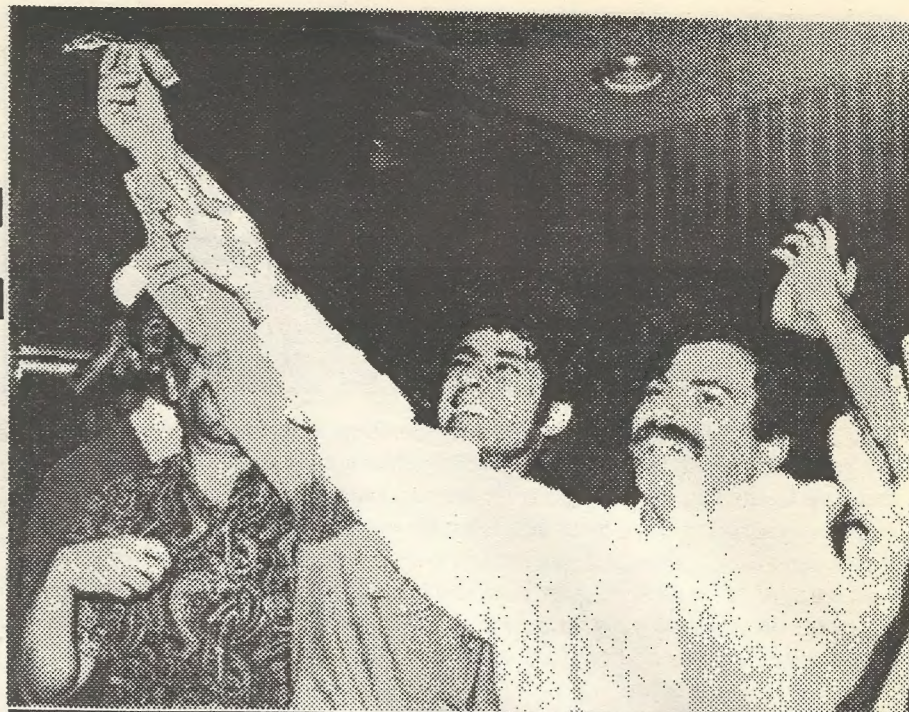
I can only hope that the people of Michigan wise up to Engler's game before it is finally too late.

Mike Kolhoff

Mike Kolhoff is a Lansing resident and a member of Active Transformation and the Syndicalist Workers Organizing Committee.

Feel Free to send in your comments and criticisms to:

PO BOX 6746  
EAST LANSING, MI  
48826



# FUCK ABBIE!

I've been reading a book called The Conspiracy about the Chicago 8 during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. It has a chapter by each of the defendants. I've only made it through half the book, but I got some good quotes from Abbie Hoffman, enjoy:

"Like after MLK's death, LBJ goes on TV and says that in the memory of King's name we should be non-violent. What the fuck is he talking about? Is he talking about sit ins in the Mekong Delta? Is he talking about "We Shall Overcome" in Vietnam? No, he isn't talking about that - he's telling the oppressed to get the fuck in the cellar, stay there, and get outta the streets. Well those days are gone. Nobody is listening to them - it's in the streets. That's where we're gonna vote. We're gonna vote heavy."

"I espoused the overthrow by any means necessary. I'd like to see it done with bubble gum, but I'm having some doubts."

"They (we) recognize that the present system is totally inoperable, totally irrelevant to the needs of the people of this country, that its foreign policy is fantastically brutal and inhumane and that they want to see a better life and that they want to see a better kind of society and that they also recognize that we live in the most advanced, the richest country in the world - in the history of the world - and we have the capabilities and the technology for relieving a great deal of human suffering in the world and we don't use these technologies, and that makes us pissed! You see, it is not only the attitude that we're living under a state of repression but also the fact that we have a vision that could be achieved!"

## LAMB BROOK THREATENED BY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

From April 29 to May 2 about 75 people gathered in the Lamb Brook area of the Green Mountains in Southern Vermont. We came out to become familiar with an area which the U.S. Forest Service is planning to destroy.

The U.S. Forest Service plans to conduct extensive roadbuilding into the Lamb Brook area, an area, which has thus far remained mostly unroaded, and "inaccessible to vehicular traffic". These road construction plans are being made so that over 3 million board feet will be able to be cut by means of clear cutting and other stripping methods.

The proposed roads will extend to the very core of the Lamb Brook natural area. These roads will also lead directly to stands of bear-clawed beech tress, that the bears rely heavily on to survive. Not only is this project going to lead to vast amounts of wilderness destruction, it is going to cost taxpayers over \$100,000, more than what the project will take in.

Lamb Brook is one of the last remaining wild places in Southern Vermont, and is an area which contains

critical habitat for Vermont's black bears, songbirds, and other remote and independent species. The State Department of Fish and Wildlife describes the area as a "region supporting high densities of cub-producing females. Generally contiguous and remote forestland, these areas contain critical habitats necessary to bear survival. The long term stability of Vermont's bear population depends upon these areas."

These plans for road construction and logging are the greatest threats to black bears and songbirds in the National Forest. We came out to see what the Forest Service is planning to destroy, and we are not going to stand for the destruction of this natural area. If we want the few remaining wild places in the United States to be preserved, the U.S. Forest Service must be stopped!

For more information contact the Green Mountain Forest Watch at: 48 Elliot Street, Brattleboro, VT 65301.

This article was mostly taken from a Green Mountain Forest Watch flyer.



# SYNDICALISM

Syndicalism proposes to reorganize social and economic life on the principles of direct democracy and workers control of economic resources. Syndicalists seek to eliminate the layers of bureaucracy and corruption which compose the capitalist socio-economic system, replacing the current top-down, pyramidal structures with an interlocking system of workplace and community organizations run democratically by working people.

Syndicalists see political parties, whatever their claims, as the agencies of oppression. The parties of the left have historically proven themselves as willing to abuse and disempower the working class as the parties of the right. As hierarchical structures based on the domination of the many by the few, political parties are incapable of liberating the working class from the chains that bind us.

Syndicalists believe that the power of the working class is in the workplace. Parliamentarianism and representative democracy are both alienating and too easily manipulated by the capitalists and the corporations. Syndicalists advocate direct democracy, where major decisions are made by real people, face-to-face and then passed along to administrative bodies for implementation.

It is the syndicalist position that combative economic organizations

(unions) are the best places to learn the rudiments of this type of decision-making structure. In a complex and inter-dependent economy, the workplace is also a position of strategic importance. Syndicalists advocate seizing control of the economy from the capitalists at the point of production.

In the day-to-day struggle of life in the capitalist system, syndicalists see the building of unions based on the principles of direct democracy and direct action as a primary goal. The creation of syndicalist insurgencies within authoritarian unions is also an area of activity.

Syndicalist organizations are characterized by the following:

- Direct democracy as the decision-making structure.
- Delegates with revocable, limited mandates and little or no executive powers.
- Regular meetings (assemblies) where significant issues are openly discussed and decisions made.
- Few or no paid officers.
- Regular elections where all officers are chosen by the membership.
- Limitations of terms of office for top officers to allow for rotation.

Additional characteristics of syndicalist organization would include ongoing efforts to expand the workplace struggle into the

community at large, since syndicalists see bringing the community into the workplace and vice versa as a basic requirement of liberation.

A region organized on syndicalist principles would be composed of many small and large communes linked confederally. Economic functions of production and distribution would be coordinated by local and regional union federations, while social decisions would be discussed and acted upon in community assemblies. Basic individual freedoms would be the starting point from which all social freedoms would expand. It is this guarantee of individual rights and freedoms which make syndicalist socialism stand above and apart from other, more authoritarian models.

S.W.O.C. Flyer

IN A SOCIETY WHERE THE LAW UPHOLDS EXPLOITATION AND ORDER SUPPORTS INJUSTICE AND FASCISM, WE MUST BY NECESSITY BREAK THE CHAINS THAT CONFINED US AND OTHERS TO SLAVERY AND INJUSTICE. IF WE BE CALLED CRIMINALS BECAUSE WE SEEK THIS, THEN LET US. HISTORY JUDGE BUT LET US NOT SUPPORT SLAVERY, IN FURTHERANCE OF FREEDOM, LET US BREAK THE CHAINS THAT BIND.



GRASSROOTS REVOLUTION NOW!

**ORGANIZE TO WIN  
BETTER CONDITIONS**  
**Syndicalist Workers Organizing  
Committee**



**P.O. Box 11172  
Lansing, MI 48901-1172**

## PUBLIC SCHOOL UNDER ATTACK

The rightwing is waging a war on public education in America, and Michigan has now become a major battlefield in that war. The passage of Proposal A has made a financial crisis inevitable. New legislative restrictions on education workers collective bargaining rights, which have been characterized as "Engler's revenge against the MEA", are actually part of an overall assault on public schools themselves. It has been education workers within public schools that have kept them functioning despite years of wanton neglect by the federal and state governments. Teachers and support workers have been meeting shortfalls in supplies and special needs out of their own pockets since the first years of the Reagan era. Now Engler seems determined to make sure those pockets are perpetually empty.

The political maneuvering which led to this crisis has been a clear illustration of the utter corruption that has come to characterize political life in this country. It was with the consent and cooperation of leading democrats that the republicans were able to remove state property taxes as a source of funding for schools, an action which will only benefit the extremely rich.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Debbie Stabenow was a prime mover in this scheme, by her own admission, seeing it as a way to increase her campaign appeal in the more backwards areas of the state (such as Gross Pointe and Bloomfield Hills).

At root the attack on public education is a component in a larger corporatist strategy, reflecting the Big-Business/Big Government partnership consolidated under Ronald Reagan. The guiding idea is to shift resources to those areas most likely to enhance the profit margin of the corporations.

In the education system this translates into increased funding for already wealthy (and mostly white) schools, and decreasing funding for already poor, mostly non-white, schools. The ironically named "schools of choice initiative" is specifically designed to allow those families with children in poor schools, who have the means to do so, to move them to the well-funded schools. What this will mean for most non-white and all poor white students is clear: a decrease in already insufficient resources.

The corporatist economic

policies of "downsizing" (layoffs, wage-cuts and firings) and "full resource utilization" (getting the most out of what's left), has been transferred to the public education system. In the economic system it has left millions of workers under-employed or unemployed. In the public school system it will leave millions of young people under-educated or uneducated.

But the education policies being pursued by the republicans are destined to hurt everyone, not just the poor and people who are not white. They are ideologically motivated, and they reflect the intentions of the far right to attack a number of freedoms which Americans have come to accept as fundamental. Since they have chosen to simultaneously attack public education, collective bargaining rights, and the existence of other political parties, the full thrust of their attack can be seen to be essentially fascistic.

The idea of a free public education is a major foundation of democracy. By manipulating people into accepting its elimination, the way is opened for the installation of a system completely alien to what has heretofore been known as America. It is a corporatist, fascist, system, and the most ironic thing about it is that it will not even need to dismantle the institutions of representative democracy. They have already become empty bureaucratic husks.

Mike Kolhoff





# WE CAN LEARN FROM THE ZAPATISTAS

ACTIVE TRANSFORMATION took the approach of trying to encourage people to come out into the streets on April 23 to confront the Ku Klux Klan's ideology and violence. While the community misleaders have been urging everyone to stay home and ignore the klan, the hate, discrimination, and terror still fester deep in the heart of this society.

Active Transformation strongly encourages direct ACTION to stop homophobia, racism, sexism, and xenophobia. But not only do we encourage it, we take part in it.

This is not the biggest problem though. The klan is a microcosm of a bigger evil. The klan strives for a reason. Their resurgence in this time of economic collapse is no coincidence, and neither is the fact that taxpayer money (\$150,000) is spent to protect the klan.

Poverty, homelessness, joblessness are at the point of crossing all racial and sexual lines and this poses a problem for our government. They do not want poor white society to realize its ties to poor Black and Latino AmeriKKKa.

The Ku Klux Klan comes in to offer a savior to the US government. Their solution is scapegoating. They blame the ills of society on the Blacks, the Japanese, Koreans, immigrants, gays and lesbians, etc. What we must realize and show to others is that this is not the answer!

The real problem is that this society puts profits before people. It puts jails and prisons ahead of homes, and bombs before food. The time is now to organize across racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender lines to find real solutions to the problems of this society. It is time for massive direct action aimed at empowering all people equally, instead of empowering a few at the top at the expense of all those below them.

As most of us know AmeriKKKa is not a democracy. It is only a democracy for the a few white males at or near the top. It is not a democracy when massive taxpayer money is spent to protect the klan, an organization aiming for genocide of much of the population. It is not a democracy when taxpayer money is used to literally KILL the Black Panther Party, an organization aiming for the empowerment of the Black race against racism and police brutality. It is not a democracy when our money is used to fund BIA genocide against the Native American population, and then fund the FBI to destroy the American Indian Movement, an organization for the empowerment of American Indians against their white murderers.

But this is just against the population of AmeriKKKa. To focus on this is to forget the countless exploits against the people of the world, so called in the name of democracy, but in reality it is for the further lining of the pockets of the rich. Just in the last ten years we have seen the plundering of the people of Nicaragua, El Salvador



(where it is beginning again), Iraq, Somalia, etc. Our tax dollars fund the murder of organizing peasants all across Central and South America.

We can learn much from the Zapatistas who rose up this past

new year in Chiapas, Mexico. We must realize and act on the fact that the US Government is at war with it's and the world's population. It is time to fight back against those who profit from our misery and toil.

**IT IS TIME FOR REVOLUTION!**

ACTIVE TRANSFORMATION MEETS AT BILBO'S RESTAURANT IN EAST LANSING EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 8PM.

JOIN US!

## ANARCHIST CITIES

Governments are invariably based in cities: whoever heard of a government ruled from a village? Very often they actually build cities to house themselves: New Delhi, Canberra, Ottawa, Washington, Chandigar and Brasilia are examples. And isn't it significant that the visitor who wants to sample the real life of a place has to escape from the city of the bureaucrats and technocrats in order to do so. He has to go ten miles from Brasilia, for example, to the Cidade Libre (Free Town) where the building workers live. They built the "City of the Year 2000" but are too poor to live there, and in their own homemade city: "a spontaneous wild west shanty-town life has arisen, which contrasts with the formality of the city itself, and which has become too valuable to destroy".

Anarchism—the political philosophy of a non-governmental society of autonomous communities—does not at first sight seem to address itself to the problems of the city at all. But there is in fact a stream of anarchist contributions to urban thought that stretches from Kropotkin to Murray Bookchin historically, and from John Turner to the International Situationists ideologically. A lot of the people who might help us evolve an anarchist philosophy of the city would never think of trying because in spirit, though less often in

practice, they have abandoned the city.

Particularly in Britain, the most highly urbanized country in the world, we have for centuries nurtured a myth of rural bliss—a myth cherished by people all across the political spectrum. Raymond Williams in his book *The Country and the City* has shown how all through history this myth has been fed into literature, also placing the lost paradise of rural bliss in some past period. And E.P. Thompson comments that what is wrong with the myth is that it has been "softened, prettified, protracted, and then taken over by the city dwellers as a major point from which to criticize industrialism. Thus it became a substitute for the utopian courage of imagining what a true community, in an industrial city, might be—indeed of imagining how far community may have already been attained."

Like Williams, he sees this as a debilitating situation: "a continuous cultural hemorrhage, a loss of rebellious blood, draining away now to Walden, now to Afghanistan, now to Cornwall, now to Mexico, the emigrants from cities solving nothing in their own countries, but kidding themselves that they have somehow opted out of contamination by a social system of which they are themselves cultural artifacts". All those merry

peasants and shepardesses of the pastoral dream are now, they point out, "the poor of Nigeria, Bolivia, Pakistan".

And the paradox is that the rural poor of the Third World are flocking to the cities in vast numbers. If you want examples of anarchist cities in the real world today, in the sense of large-scale human settlements resulting from popular direct action and not governmental action, it is to the Third World you would have to turn. In Latin America, Asia and Africa, the enormous movement of population into the big cities during the last two decades has resulted in the growth of huge peripheral squatter settlements around the existing cities, inhabited by the "invisible" people who have no official urban existence. Pat Cooke points out that cities grow and develop on two levels: the official, theoretical level, and that of the majority of the population. The populations of many Latin American cities are unofficial citizens with a popular economy outside the institutional financial structure of the city.

One way of reducing pressure on these exploding cities would be to improve life in villages and small towns. But that would demand revolutionary changes in land tenure, and on starting small-scale labor-intensive industries, and



in dramatically raising farm incomes. Until that happens people will always prefer to take a chance in the city rather than starve in the country. The big difference from the explosion of urbanism in 19th century Britain is that then industrialization preceded urbanization, while today the reverse is true. The official view of the shanty-towns of the Third World is that they are breeding grounds for every kind of crime, vice, disease, social and family disorganization. But John Turner, the anarchist architect who has done more than most people to change the way we perceive such settlements, remarks:

"Ten years of work in Peruvian *barriadas* indicates that such a view is grossly inaccurate: although it serves some vested political and bureaucratic interests, it bears little relation to reality...Instead of chaos and disorganization, the evidence instead points to highly organized invasions of public land in the face of violent police opposition, internal political organization with yearly local elections, thousands of people living together in an orderly fashion with no police protection or public services. The original straw houses constructed during invasions are converted as rapidly as possible into brick and cement structures with an investment totalling millions of dollars in labor and materials. Employment rates, wages, literacy, and educational levels are all higher than in the central city slums (from which most *barriada* residents have escaped) and higher than the national average. Crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution and gambling are rare, except for petty thievery, the incidence of which is seemingly smaller than in other parts of the city."

What an extraordinary tribute to the capacity for mutual aid of poor people defying authority. The reader who is familiar with Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* is bound to be reminded of his chapter in praise of the medieval city, where he observes that "Wherever men had found, or expected to find, some protection behind their town walls, they instituted co-jurations, their fraternities, their friendships, united in one common idea, and boldly marching towards a new life of mutual support and liberty. And they succeeded so well that in three of four hundred years they had changed the very face of Europe." Kropotkin is not a romantic adulator of the free cities of the middle ages, he knows what went wrong with them, and of their failure to avoid an exploitive relationship with the peasantry. But modern scholarship supports his interpretation of their evolution. Walter Ullman for example remarks that they "represent a rather clear demonstration of entities governing themselves" and that "In order to transact business, the community assembled in its entirety...the assembly was not 'representative' of the whole, but was the whole."

This implies a certain size and scale of communities, and Kropotkin again, in his astonishingly up-to-date *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, argues on technical grounds for dispersal, for the integration of agriculture and industry, for (as Lewis Mumford puts it) "a more decentralized urban development in small units, respon-

sive to direct human contact, and enjoying both urban and rural advantages". Kropotkin's contemporary Ebenezer Howard, in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* asked himself the simple question: how can we get rid of the grimness of the big cities and the lack of opportunities in the country (which drives people to the cities)? How on the other hand can we keep the beauty of the country and the opportunities of the city. His answer is not only the garden city, but what he called the social city, the network of communities. The same message comes from Paul and Percy Goodman in *Communities: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* where the second of their three paradigms, the New Commune is what professor Thomas Reiner calls "a polynucleated city mirroring its anarcho-syndicalist premises". And the same message comes again in Leopold Kohr's dazzling essay "The City as Convivial Centre" where he finds the good metropolis to be "a polynuclear federation of cities" just as his city is a federation of squares.

And like Kropotkin too, the *Blueprint for Survival* sees the goal as "a decentralized society of small communities where industries are small enough to be responsive to each community's needs". And long before the energy crisis hit people's consciousness, Murray Bookchin in his essay "Towards a Liberatory Technology" argued the energy case for the polynuclear city:

"To maintain a large city requires immense quantities of coal and petroleum. By contrast, solar energy, wind power and tidal energy reach us mainly in small packets. Except for great dams and turbines, the new devices seldom provide more than a few thousand kilowatt-hours of electricity. It is hard to believe that we will ever be able to design solar collectors that can furnish us with the immense blocks of electrical power produced by a giant steam plant; it is equally difficult to conceive of a battery of wind turbines that will provide us with enough electricity to illuminate Manhattan Island. If homes and factories are heavily concentrated, devices for using clean sources of energy will probably remain mere playthings; but if urban communities are reduced in size and widely spread over the land, there is no reason why these devices cannot be combined to provide us all with all the amenities of an industrial civilization. To use solar, wind and tidal power effectively, the giant city must be dispersed. A new type of community, carefully tailored to the nature and resources of a region, must replace the sprawling urban belts of today."

A quite different line of anarchist urban thought is presented in Richard Sennett's *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*. Several threads of thought are woven together in this book. The first is a notion the author derives from the psychologist Erik Erikson, that in adolescence men seek a purified identity to escape from pain and uncertainty, and that true adulthood is found in the acceptance of diversity and disorder. The second is that modern American society freezes men in the adolescent posture—a gross simplification of urban life in which, when rich

enough, people escape from the complexity of the city to private family circles of security in the suburbs—the purified community. The third is that the way city planning has been conceived in the past, with techniques like zoning and elimination of "non-conforming users", has abetted the process, especially by projecting trends into the future as a basis for present energy and expenditure. "Professional planners of highways, of redevelopment housing, of inner-city renewal projects have treated challenges from displaced communities or community groups as a threat to the value of their plans rather than as a natural part of the effort at social reconstruction." What this really means, says Sennett, is that planners have wanted to take the plan, the projection in advance, "as more 'true' than the historical turns, the unforeseen movements in the real time of human lives".

His prescription for overcoming the crisis of American cities is a reversal of these trends, for "outgrowing a purified identity". He wants cities where people are forced to confront each other: "There would be no policing, nor any form of central control, of schooling, zoning, renewal, or city activities that could be performed through common community action, or, even more importantly through direct, nonviolent conflict in the city itself." Nonviolent? Yes, because Sennett claims that the present modern affluent city is one in which aggression and conflict are denied outlets other than violence, precisely because of the lack of personal confrontation. (Cries for law and order are greatest when communities are most isolated from other people in the city.) The clearest example, he suggests, of the way violence occurs "is found in the pressures on police in modern cities. Police are expected to be bureaucrats of hostility resolution" but "a society that visualizes the lawful response to disorder as impersonal, passive coercion only invites terrifying outbreaks of police rioting". Whereas the anarchist city that he envisages, "pushing men to say what they think about each other in order to forge some mutual pattern of compatibility", is not a compromise between order and violence, but a wholly different way of living in which people wouldn't have to choose between the two.

And are cities going to change? They have to because they are collapsing, replies Murray Bookchin in his book *The Limits of the City*. The cities of the modern world are breaking down, he declares, under sheer excess of size and growth. "they are disintegrating administratively, institutionally, and logistically; they are increasingly unable to provide the minimal services for human habitation, personal safety, and the means of transporting goods and people..." Even where cities have some semblance of formal democracy, "almost every civic problem is resolved not by action that goes to its social roots, but by legislation that further restricts the rights of the citizen as an autonomous being and enhances the power of the super-individual agencies."

Nor can the professionals help: "Rarely could city planning

transcend the destructive social conditions to which it was a response. To the degree that it turned in upon itself as a specialized profession—the activity of architects, engineers and sociologists—it too fell within the narrow division of labor of the society it was meant to control. Not surprisingly, some of the most humanistic notions of urbanism come from amateurs who retain contact with the authentic experiences of people and the mundane agonies of metropolitan life."

He's right. Ebenezer Howard was a short-hand writer and Patrick Geddes was a botanist. But the particular bunch of amateurs who, for Murray Bookchin, point the way are the young members of the counterculture: "Much has been written about the retreat of dropout youth to rural communes. Far less known is the extent to which ecologically-minded countercultural youth began to subject city planning to a devastating review, often advancing alternative proposals to dehumanizing urban 'revitalization' and 'rehabilitation' projects..."

For the countercultural planners "the point of departure was not the pleasing object of the 'efficiency' with which it expedited traffic, communications and economic activities. rather, these new planners concerned themselves primarily with the relationship of design to the fostering of personal intimacy, many-sided social relationships, nonhierarchical modes of organization, communistic living arrangements and material independence from the market economy. Design, here, took its point of departure not from abstract concepts of space or a functional endeavor to improve the status quo but from an explicit critique of the status quo and a conception of the free human relationships that were to replace it. The design elements of a plan followed from radically new social alternatives. The attempt was made to replace hierarchical space by liberated space."

They were, if fact, rediscovering the polis, reinventing the commune. Now Murray Bookchin knows that the countercultural movement has subsided from its high point of the 1960s, and he inveighs against the crude political rhetoric which was the next fashion. "Far more than the flowers of the mid-sixties, the angry clenched fists of the late sixties were irrelevant in trying to reach and increasingly alarmed and uncomprehending public." But he insists that certain demands and issues raised are imperishable. The call for "new, decentralized communities based on an ecological outlook that unites the most advanced features of urban and rural life" is not going to die out again because of the harsh fact that "few choices are left today for the existing society".

COLIN WARD





# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## \*WEDNESDAY MAY 25

Active Transformation Meeting, 8 pm Bilbos Restaurant in East Lansing.

## \*FRIDAY MAY 27

Anarchist Community Center Gathering begins 3:30 pm; 4202 & 4210 Trumbell Ave., (the corner of Willis) in Detroit. For info call (313)832-0114 (Decentralized zine, E mail, AAA - Web, Show and tell, bands, Pissed Off Women: Trinity.

## \*SATURDAY MAY 28

Anarchist Gathering continues all day at Trumbell (Community outreach, free schools, starting a collec tive, food not bombs, SNCC history, bonfire, Pissed Off Wimmin: Trinity.

## \*SUNDAY MAY 29

Anarchist Gathering continues all day (Wimmins group, Naked men drumming, gender issues, community economics, fighting KKK, vegetarianism, veganism, race and queer issues, death wave dance party, Pissed Off Wimmin: Trinity.

## \*EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 8 PM

Active Transformation meeting at Bilbo's Restaurant.

## \*MONDAY MAY 30

Anarchist Gathering continues until 6pm (follow up discussions, fundraising, and tax issues.

Progressive Action Alliance meeting (every Monday) 7 pm rm. 441 MSU Union.

Send relevant event info. for future calendars

**ACTIVE**  
**TRANSFORMATION**



**MEETS AT  
BILBO'S  
RESTAURANT**

(LOCATED IN  
DOWNTOWN  
EAST LANSING)

**EVERY WEDNESDAY,  
8:00 PM**

